

# The St. Stephen's North-East Society

## 2022-2023

The following events were organized and conducted by the St. Stephen's North-East Society during the academic year 2022-2023:

### Talks and Panel Discussions

1. *"Healing of Colonial Wounds: Pitt Rivers Museum and Repatriation of Naga Ancestral Remains"*

Speaker: Dr. Arkotong Longkumer

Date: 15th October, 2022

Time: 3:30 p.m.

Platform: Google Meet

The talk focused on the initiative by The Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford to reinstitute artifacts and ancestral remains of deep cultural and historical value to their rightful homes. This included the repatriation of many Naga ancestral remains. These had been displayed in the museum as "exotic and primitive" for many years. This initiative was catalyzed by two distinguished anthropologists, Dr. Dolly Kikon and Dr. Arkotong Longkumer. In his talk with us, Dr. Longkumer elucidated on the significance of the ancestral remains among the Nagas, the process of reaching out to the museum and the repatriation programme that is to be undertaken in the coming times.

2. *"AFSPA and the North-East"*

Speaker: Sanjoy Hazarika

Date: 13th January, 2023

Time: 3:00 p.m.

Venue: Seminar Room

This talk was the first offline talk that the society organized since the advent of the Covid pandemic. The speaker briefly introduced the audience to the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) and its implementation and impact in the North-East. The talk explored the history of the so-called 'conflict-prone' North-East India, reasons that led to implementation of the 'Draconian Act', the 2021 Oting incident and other narratives surrounding the act, the Jeevan Reddy Committee that he was a part of and the alternatives to the act. This was followed by an intense discussion with the students who showed immense interest in the topic and also shared their experiences with the act.

3. *“Archaeology of Northeast India: On-going research in the Naga Metamorphics and Naga Hills Ophiolites, Nagaland”*

Speaker: Dr. Tiatoshi Jamir

Date: 8th February, 2023

Time: 4:00 p.m.

Platform: Google Meet

The St. Stephen's North-East Society in collaboration with the History Society organised this talk session to create an awareness and understanding about the archaeological whereabouts of the North-East region of India. The speaker examined the problems in tracing the origins of agriculture and emergence of complex societies due to the lack of well-excavated sites with reliable dating evidence. In addition, the speaker also presented exciting evidence which point to the unexplored potentiality of archaeological sites in North-East India.

4. *“Torture and Unbinding of the Everyday in the Northeast: Dhrubajyoti Borah's Kalantarar Gadya”*

Speaker: Amit R. Baishya

Date: 15th March, 2023

Time: 6:00 p.m.

Platform: Google Meet

The St. Stephen's North-East Society in collaboration with the English Literary Society held a talk session which drew attention to the presentation of the 'everyday' in the North-East life through various narratives. The speaker, Mr. Amit R. Baishya, who is an associate Professor in the department of English at the University of Oklahoma, focused on the work of Dhrubajyoti Borah called, 'Kalantarar Gadya'. He unbinds and illustrates the element of 'fear' which overruns the 'everyday' life in North-East conflict areas while reading excerpts from the mentioned work. The talk was followed by a brief Q&A session where Mr. Baishya interacted with those present online.

5. Informal Session with Rohan Philem.

Speaker: Rohan Philem

Date: 16th February, 2023

Time: 2:00 p.m.

Venue: Room C

The society had the pleasure of interacting with Mr. Rohan Philem, who is a cyclist, humanitarian and environmentalist. He had pedaled across India during the pandemic to feed the needy and is known for his anti-drug and 'feed the hungry' campaign. In the live session, he narrated his own story and presented his approach and philosophy towards life, and the hardships and motivations which he faced in pursuing the things he loved to

do. The talk was insightful and entertaining, and drew attention to the usefulness of 'lived experiences'. This was followed by a very interactive Q&A session with the students.

6. *North-East India: Margins, Settlers, and Acculturation*

Panelists: Swargajyoti Gohain, Thongkholal Haokip and Tanmoy Bhattacharya

Date: 5th April, 2023

Time: 4:00 p.m.

Venue: College Hall

This panel discussion was a new initiative of our society as a part of giving an academic edge to our flagship event, Unicolour, apart from its yearly cultural performances. Our three panelists were from three very different academic backgrounds, with one specializing in Sociology and Anthropology, one in Law and Governance and the other in Linguistics respectively. The discussion was moderated by our very own Bursar, Dr. Chinkhanlun Guite. Each panelist spoke on the given topic according to their area of expertise. The discussions were mainly centered on the border and migration issues faced by the states and the impact these have on the language and the culture of the people there.

7. *"Aspects of Matrilineal Practices and Some Reflections on Khasi Religious Folklife: Tigerwomen, Alcohol, and Gender Swapping"*

Speaker: Margaret Lyngdoh

Date: 21st April, 2023

Time: 4:00 p.m.

Platform: Google Meet

The speaker introduced us to the matrilineal society among the Khasis and the many narratives surrounding the same. She gave us a detailed overview of her fieldwork which she had undertaken herself among the Khasis living in Meghalaya, especially among the tigerwomen of the community. The talk not only focused on the vernacular practices of female lineage descent or inheritance laws among the Khasis, but instead looked at micro-markers of matrilineality through its expressions in little known Khasi traditions of human-animal transformations. She elaborated on the practice of Tiger transformations, one such prevalent human-animal transformations among the Khasis, mentioning how aspects like these play a key role in sustaining the matrilineal practice even in the Khasi encounter with Christianity as well as globalising movements.

## The Hills are Alive (Blog)

The Society's blog, *The Hills are Alive*, is a platform in which various articles, informational pieces, book reviews, and opinion pieces from the students of the Society

are shared. It is headed by the Literary Department of the Society. Following are the pieces which have been published in this academic year:

December 2022

1. The Heraka Movement - "Hindu" India or a "Christian" Naga Nation?
2. Border Disputes of Assam

February 2023

1. A Celebration of Renewal
2. The Many Faces of Losar in the Nepali-speaking Communities
3. Losar- A Wave of Prosperity and Peace from Tibet to Baltistan
4. Losar and the Monpa Tribe

March 2023

1. Kuki Women and their Development in the Contemporary World

## Orchid (Annual Journal)

While Orchid is still in the works, here is what we were able to do so far. We were lucky to get the chance to interview a couple of personalities from the region based on our theme 'languages':

1. Rev. Dr. Vijay D'Souza, Director, NEILAC
2. Koloma - Folk fusion band from Tripura
3. Mickma Tshering Lepcha - Musician and frontman of the band Sofiyum
4. Lungshai Leisan - Illustrator, animator, artist from Ukhrul, Manipur
5. Alyssa Pachuau - Children's book illustrator, artist based in New York

## North-East Lunch

Date: 30th September, 2022

The annual North-East lunch was held in the college mess with the inclusion of various new dishes that appealed to the masses. It was the first event that was held under the new council.

## Echoes of the Eight

Date: 5th November, 2022

The Echoes of the eight that was held during this academic session was the first after a hiatus of 3 years due to covid. It saw all the states performing with great fun and enthusiasm. There was an addition of a group song at the very end, in which everyone participated.

## Unicolour

Date: April 5-6, 2023

This year the society split our Annual event, Unicolour, into two days (5th and 6th April): The first day was Academic in nature, while the second day presented the artistic side of the North-Eastern states through musical and cultural performances-

**Day 1:** The first day commenced with an inter-college quiz competition, with seven teams from different colleges participating. The questions asked focused on the North-East region and its various political and cultural developments. This was followed by an intra-college debate for which two teams were assembled. Each team comprised three junior members and one senior member. The motion of the debate was, *"This House believes that The Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) should be revoked from all North-Eastern states with immediate effect."*

The first day of Unicolour closed with a panel discussion on the topic, *"North-East India: Margins, Settlers, and Acculturation."* The panelists included Swargajyoti Gohain, Thongkholal Haokip and Tanmoy Bhattacharya. The event was moderated by our college bursar, Dr. Chinkhanlun Guite.

**Day 2:** The second day witnessed a lot of excitement and participation from both the guests, other colleges and our own students. There were cultural performances from each of the seven sisters and one brother of the North-East region. Through an attire show, there was a display of various indigenous attire from the North-East region, and a play was also enacted by the Third Years of the North-East society. Additionally, a number of food stalls, games stalls and an information desk was set up on both days.

## Bihu Festival

Date: 19th January, 2023

In collaboration with Virsa, the Punjabi Literary Society, the Tamil and Telugu community, and others, the harvest festival of Bihu was observed. There were cultural performances on exhibit, as well as a variety of cuisines from each of the participating communities.

## Losar celebration

Date: 25th February, 2023

The celebration of Losar was a new event which sought to accommodate and embrace students from Ladakh, Sikkim, the Darjeeling Hills, Nepal, Tibet, and Bhutan. The society blog included articles on the subject to show how the event was observed in various locales. Dance, music, and regional cuisine were all featured at the occasion.

## Alumni Outreach Program

This program was a new initiative by our society in the academic year of 2022-2023. In the course of starting and developing this vertical, a new logo was made and four Alumni from the North-East have been successfully interviewed, viz. Imsennaro Walling, Armstrong Pame, Khamrosang Buhril and Imanuel Imti. Five other Alumni have agreed for questionnaires and interviews and we await their response on the same.

## Society Merchandise

The publicity team worked with the Treasurer to create the society's merchandise. This academic session, our merchandise consisted of badges, tote bags and T-shirts.